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Written testimony in OPPOSITION of Senate bill 57,
AN ACT EXPANDING THE BEVERAGE CONTAINER REDEMPTION SYSTEM

To: The Hon. Edward Meyer, Co-Chairman, The Hon. Richard Roy, Co-Chairman, The Hon. Andrew M. Maynard, Vice-Chairman, The Hon. Paul Davis, Vice-Chairman, The Hon. Andrew W. Roraback, Ranking Member, The Hon. Clark J. Chapin, Ranking Member, and the members of the Environment Committee

Good afternoon Chairman Meyer, Chairman Roy, and members of the Environment Committee. My name is Ken Capano and I am the owner/operator of the ShopRite of Norwich, ShopRite of New London, and the ShopRite of Clinton.

I am submitting this testimony today to voice my strong opposition for Senate bill 57, an act that would expand the beverage container redemption system to juice, punch, tea, and sports drinks.

Expansion of this law will only further strain my stores during this economic downturn and hurt my customers' pockets.

As you are aware, beverage prices have already increased due to the expansion to water. To compensate for the increased costs of complying with the new provisions of the law, costs were passed down to me, resulting in the price of water and soft drinks increasing by \$1.00 per case. The nickel deposit was then added on top of that price, which means that my customers are now forced to pay both of these increases, making the cost of bottled water and soft drinks higher in Connecticut than in any neighboring state. Expanding the law again will only drive prices higher for the customer. Now is not the time to add to the financial burden my customers are already shouldering.

While my customers should not have to shoulder another food tax, my ShopRite stores can no longer shoulder the brunt of complying with the current law. Instead of expanding the bottle law, you should be looking at enforcement of the current provisions. Not all retailers accept bottles, putting unnecessary strain on ShopRite and other supermarkets. There needs to be better enforcement to guarantee that all are assuming their fair share of the cost of redemption. My stores redeem up to 2 ½ times what they sell. We absorb the loss but we cannot continue to do so if you expand the bottle law to these new categories of containers.

Additionally, the current law does not adequately compensate us for the recycling service we perform. Handling fees are 2 cents on soda and 1 ½ cents on beer. The actual cost of handling these items is between 4-6 cents. In order to mitigate this loss it is imperative that the handling fee is increased and applied equally to all beverages. Senate bill 57 makes no mention of increasing the handling fee to help retailers comply with expansion.

An increase in handling fees is essential for my store to remain competitive with other classes of trade and would offer additional resources in absorbing the huge volume of bottles that would now be coming back to the store if the law is expanded.

While I cannot support this Senate bill 57, I do offer my support in working with you to develop other sustainable goals to help the environment. To truly make an impact on the environment, and to decrease litter in Connecticut, we should concentrate our focus on developing a single-stream, curbside recycling program.

This type of program would encourage more recycling, as residents would now have a recycling program that fits their busy lives. They would no longer need to drive to a redemption point and stand in line to return their bottles. Instead they would be able to bring their recyclables to the curb for pickup. Curbside recycling would also allow for the recycling of a broader category of items, rather than just beverage containers.

A single-stream curbside recycling program also has the potential to lower consumer grocery costs while generating new revenues for the State. Consumer costs would be decreased due to the elimination of the bottle deposit, while the State would now have the chance to earn income from recycled materials.

Based on all of the above, I ask that you oppose Senate bill 57 expanding the bottle law, and instead support the creation of a statewide, single-stream, curbside recycling project. That would be a win-win situation for the State, retailers, and all consumers.

Thank you.